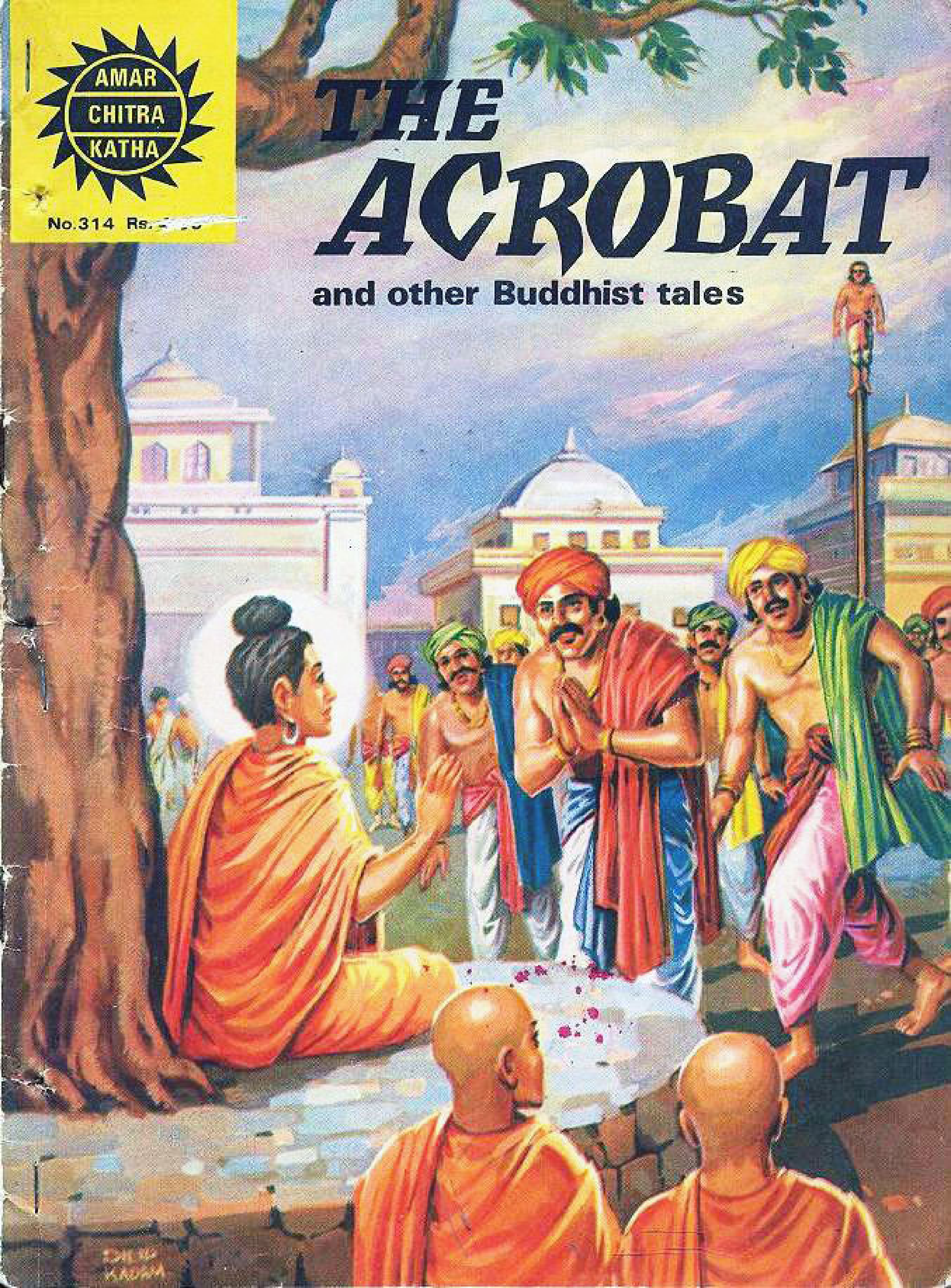
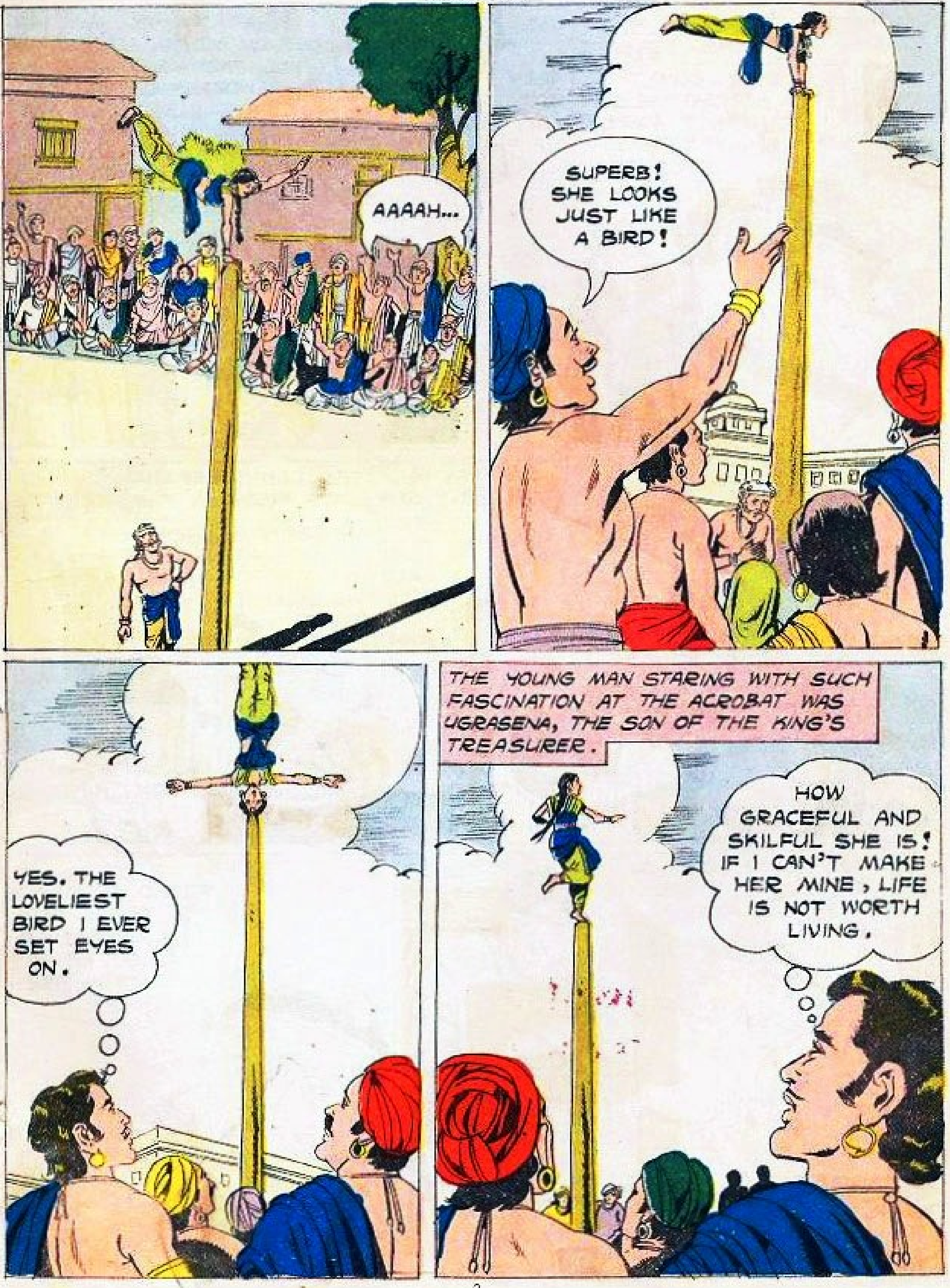
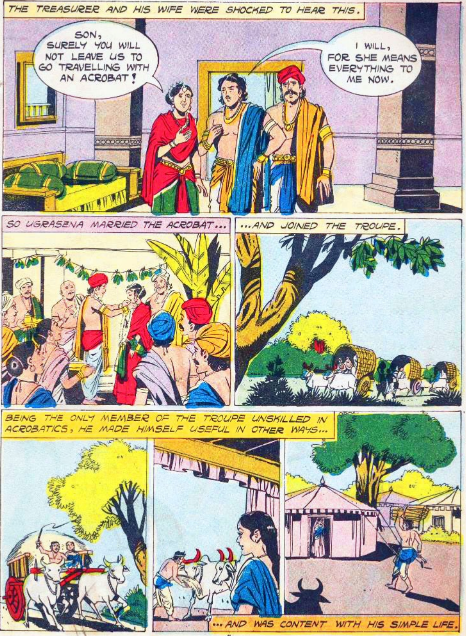

AMAR CHITRA KATHA
No.314 Rs.
THE ACROBAT
and other Buddhist tales

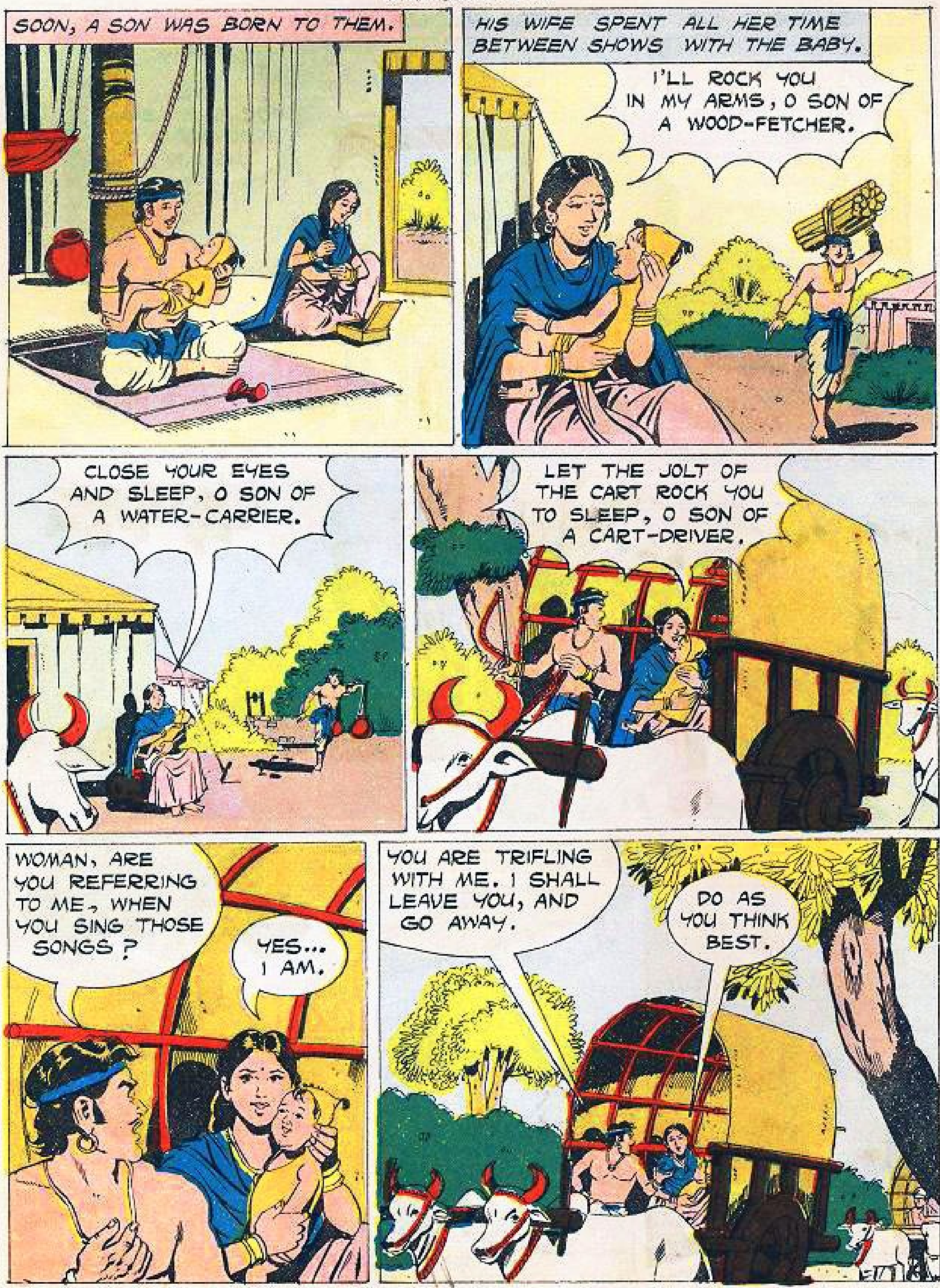

THE ACROBAT
THE CITY OF RAJAGRIHA WAS BUZZING WITH EXCITEMENT.
HAVE YOU HEARD? THEY ARE COMING!
YES. IT'S BEEN A YEAR SINCE WE SAW THEM LAST.
THEY ARE COMING! THEY ARE COMING! THE ACROBATS ARE COMING!
AND A FEW DAYS LATER, RAJAGRIHA JUBILANTLY WELCOMED ITS VISITORS.

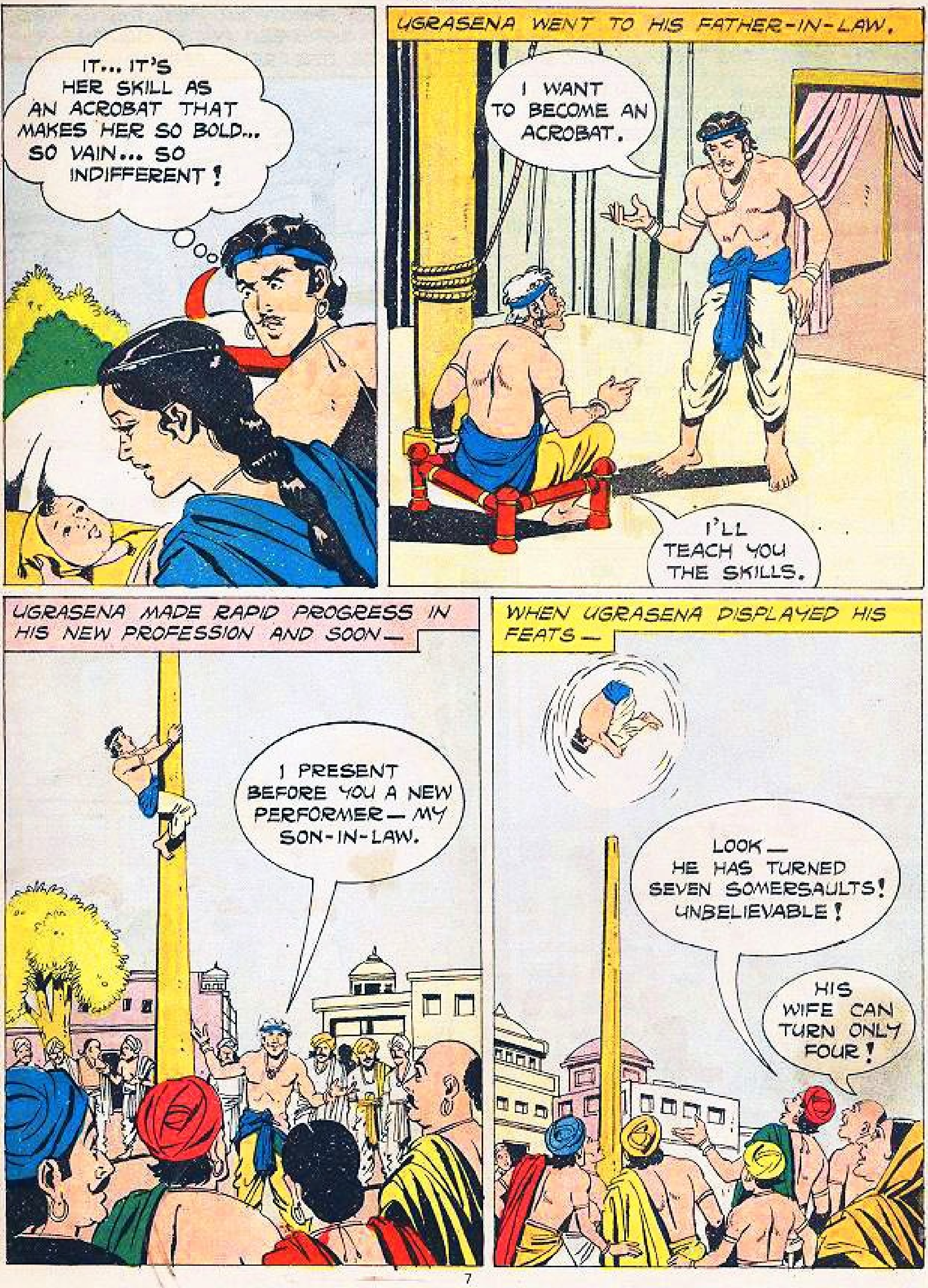

CROWDS GATHERED...
...AND THOSE AT THE VERY BACK STOOD ON THEIR TOES TO GET A BETTER VIEW.
LET THE SHOW BEGIN.


AAAAH...
SUPERB! SHE LOOKS JUST LIKE A BIRD!
YES. THE LOVELIEST BIRD I EVER SET EYES ON.
THE YOUNG MAN STARING WITH SUCH FASCINATION AT THE ACROBAT WAS UGRASENA, THE SON OF THE KING'S TREASURER.
HOW GRACEFUL AND SKILFUL SHE IS! IF I CAN'T MAKE HER MINE, LIFE IS NOT WORTH LIVING.


UGRASENA WENT HOME AND FLUNG HIMSELF ON HIS BED.
FATHER, MOTHER—I WANT TO MARRY THE ACROBAT WE SAW TODAY. IF I CAN'T MARRY HER, I SHALL STARVE MYSELF TO DEATH.
MY DEAR SON, WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
WHAT CAN YOU HAVE IN COMMON WITH AN ACROBAT? WE WILL FIND YOU A GIRL... ONE WORTHY OF YOU...
IT'S HER OR NONE! I SHALL NOT EVEN LOOK AT ANOTHER GIRL.
THE HELPLESS TREASURER AND HIS WIFE SENT UGRASENA'S FRIEND TO THE ACROBAT'S FATHER.
MY FRIEND WISHES TO MARRY YOUR DAUGHTER. AS A MARRIAGE PORTION, HERE IS ALL THE GOLD YOU MIGHT DESIRE.
FOR SHAME! ARE YOU ASKING ME TO SELL MY DAUGHTER?
IF YOUR FRIEND IS WILLING TO TRAVEL WITH US, WHEREVER WE GO, HE MAY MARRY HER.


THE TREASURER AND HIS WIFE WERE SHOCKED TO HEAR THIS.
SON, SURELY YOU WILL NOT LEAVE US TO GO TRAVELLING WITH AN ACROBAT!
I WILL, FOR SHE MEANS EVERYTHING TO ME NOW.
SO UGRASENA MARRIED THE ACROBAT...
...AND JOINED THE TROUPE.
BEING THE ONLY MEMBER OF THE TROUPE UNSKILLED IN ACROBATICS, HE MADE HIMSELF USEFUL IN OTHER WAYS...
...AND WAS CONTENT WITH HIS SIMPLE LIFE.

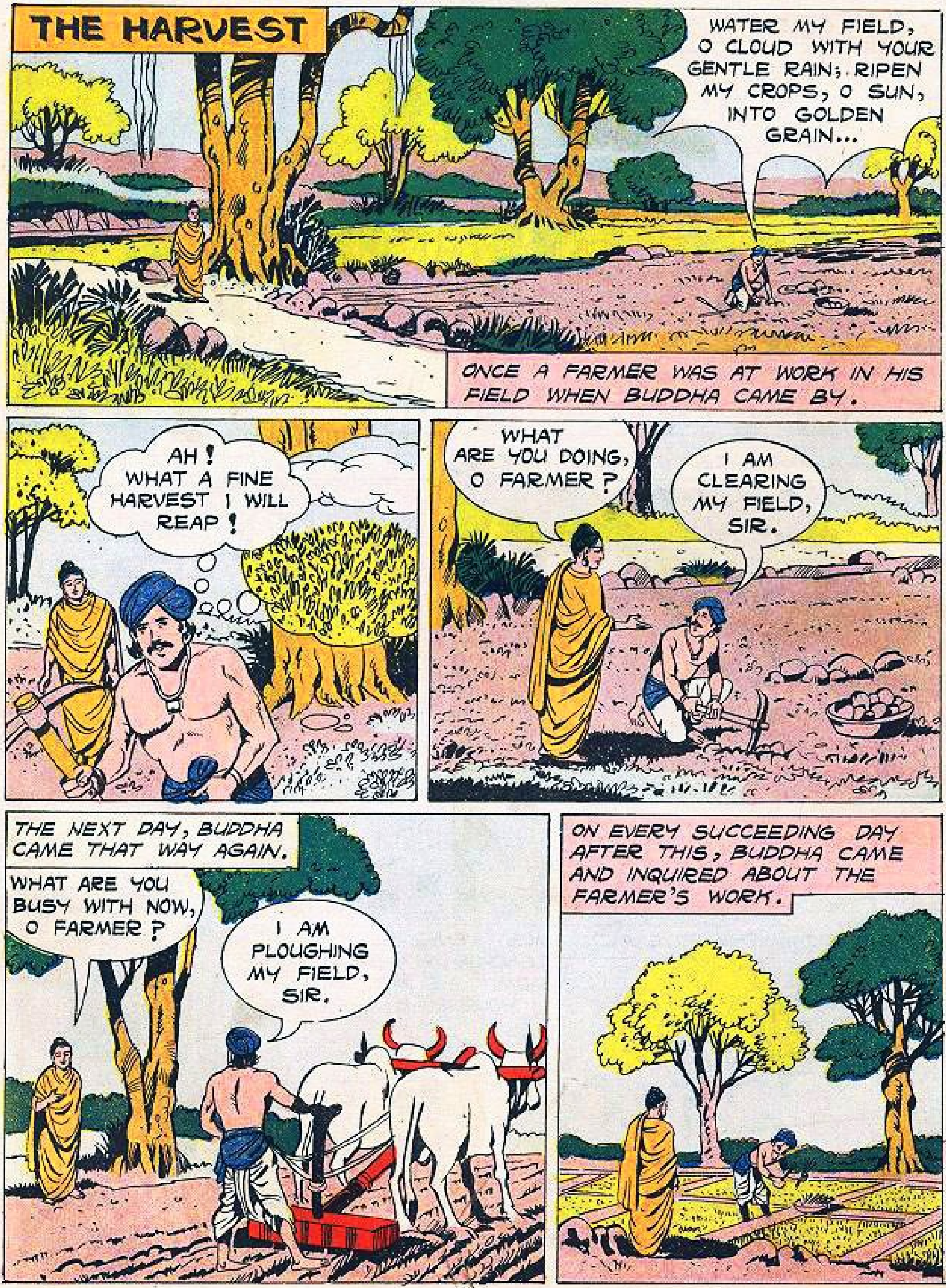

SOON, A SON WAS BORN TO THEM.
HIS WIFE SPENT ALL HER TIME BETWEEN SHOWS WITH THE BABY.
I'LL ROCK YOU IN MY ARMS, O SON OF A WOOD-FETCHER.
CLOSE YOUR EYES AND SLEEP, O SON OF A WATER-CARRIER.
LET THE JOLT OF THE CART ROCK YOU TO SLEEP, O SON OF A CART-DRIVER.
WOMAN, ARE YOU REFERRING TO ME, WHEN YOU SING THOSE SONGS ?
YES... I AM.
YOU ARE TRIFLING WITH ME. I SHALL LEAVE YOU, AND GO AWAY.
DO AS YOU THINK BEST.

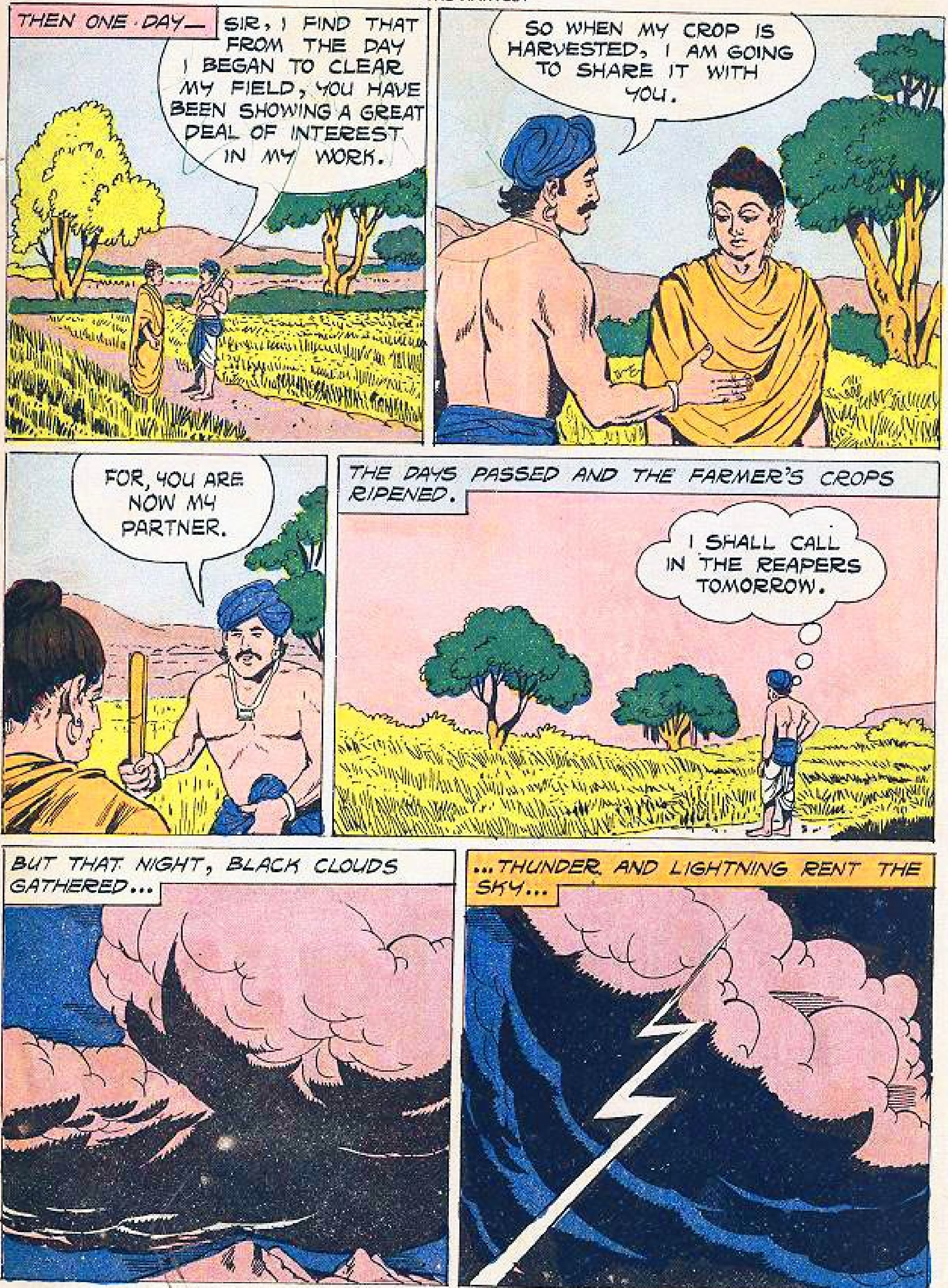

IT... IT'S HER SKILL AS AN ACROBAT THAT MAKES HER SO BOLD... SO VAIN... SO INDIFFERENT!
UGRASENA WENT TO HIS FATHER-IN-LAW.
I WANT TO BECOME AN ACROBAT.
I'LL TEACH YOU THE SKILLS.
UGRASENA MADE RAPID PROGRESS IN HIS NEW PROFESSION AND SOON—
I PRESENT BEFORE YOU A NEW PERFORMER— MY SON-IN-LAW.
WHEN UGRASENA DISPLAYED HIS FEATS—
LOOK— HE HAS TURNED SEVEN SOMERSAULTS! UNBELIEVABLE!
HIS WIFE CAN TURN ONLY FOUR!



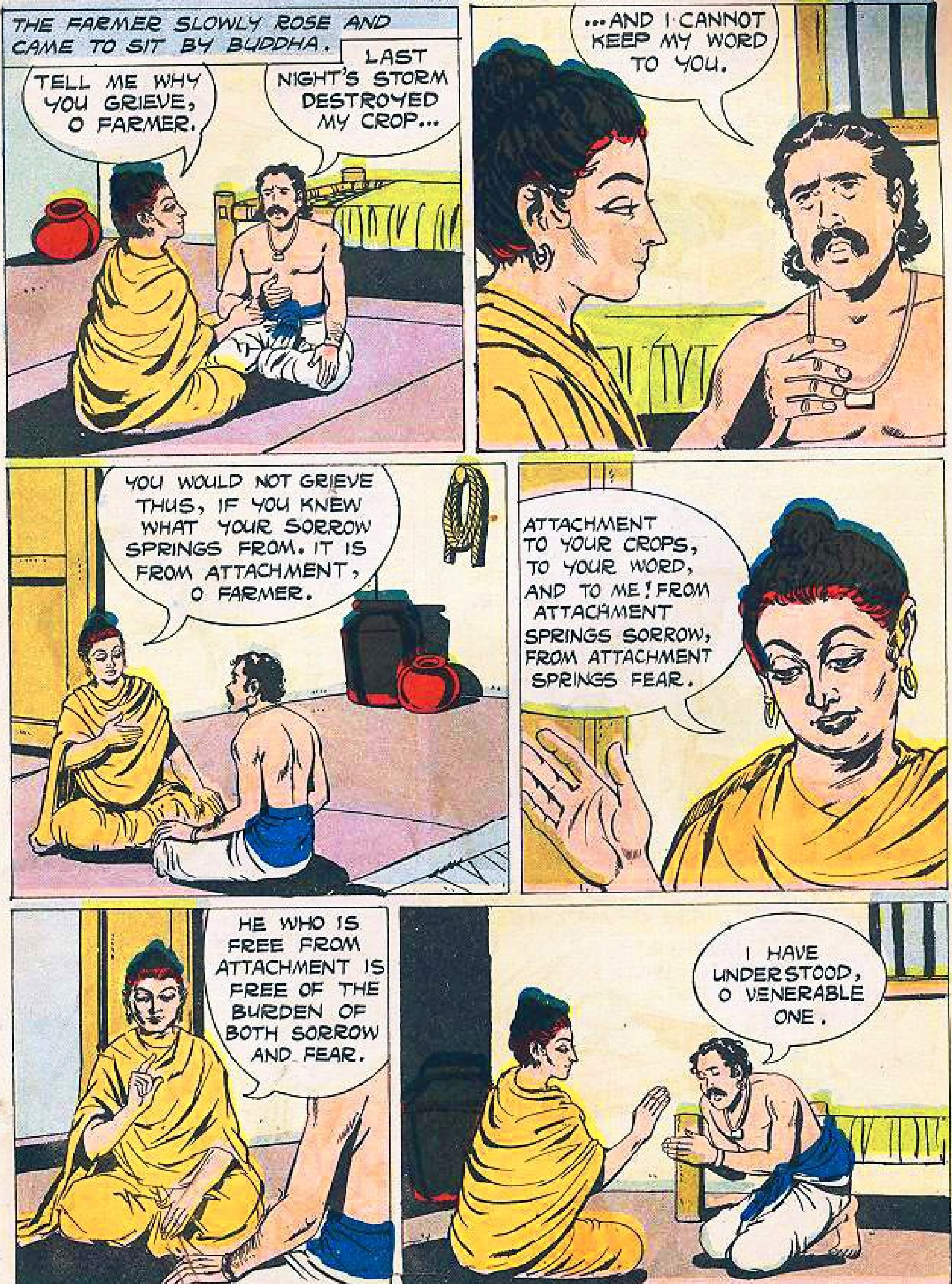
SOON AT RAJAGRIHA, NEWS SPREAD THAT THE ACROBATS WERE RETURNING AND, WITH THEM, THE TREASURER'S SON.
IT SEEMS UGRASENA WILL PERFORM THE FEAT OF TURNING FOURTEEN SOMERSAULTS IN THE AIR!
IMPOSSIBLE! YOU ARE JOKING!
ON THE APPOINTED DAY, THE ENTIRE CITY GATHERED IN THE SQUARE TO WATCH UGRASENA PERFORM.
JUST AS HE TURNED THE FIRST SOMERSAULT —
LOOK! THE HOLY TEACHER!


WHEN HE CAME BACK TO POSITION —
?
IT... IT IS BUDDHA!
AS UGRASENA GAZED AT BUDDHA...
...A CHANGE CAME OVER HIM.
HE SLID DOWN THE POLE AND —
MOST VENERABLE TEACHER, PLEASE ADMIT ME INTO YOUR FOLD.

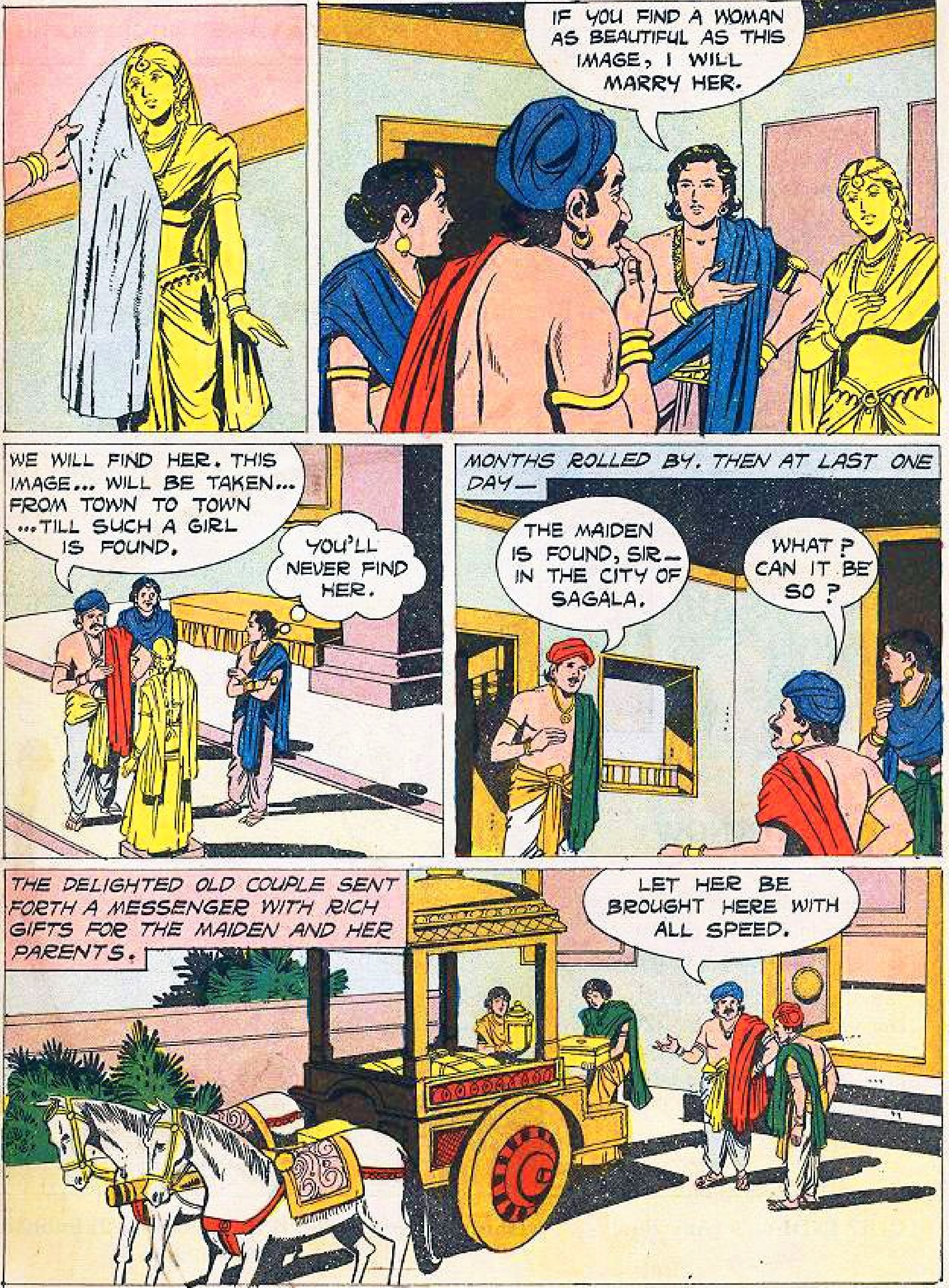

THE HARVEST
WATER MY FIELD, O CLOUD WITH YOUR GENTLE RAIN; RIPEN MY CROPS, O SUN, INTO GOLDEN GRAIN...
ONCE A FARMER WAS AT WORK IN HIS FIELD WHEN BUDDHA CAME BY.
AH! WHAT A FINE HARVEST I WILL REAP!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, O FARMER?
I AM CLEARING MY FIELD, SIR.
THE NEXT DAY, BUDDHA CAME THAT WAY AGAIN.
WHAT ARE YOU BUSY WITH NOW, O FARMER?
I AM PLOUGHING MY FIELD, SIR.
ON EVERY SUCCEEDING DAY AFTER THIS, BUDDHA CAME AND INQUIRED ABOUT THE FARMER'S WORK.


THEN ONE DAY—
SIR, I FIND THAT FROM THE DAY I BEGAN TO CLEAR MY FIELD, YOU HAVE BEEN SHOWING A GREAT DEAL OF INTEREST IN MY WORK.
SO WHEN MY CROP IS HARVESTED, I AM GOING TO SHARE IT WITH YOU.
FOR, YOU ARE NOW MY PARTNER.
THE DAYS PASSED AND THE FARMER'S CROPS RIPENED.
I SHALL CALL IN THE REAPERS TOMORROW.
BUT THAT NIGHT, BLACK CLOUDS GATHERED...
...THUNDER AND LIGHTNING RENT THE SKY...


...AND A RAGING STORM BROKE OUT.
THE NEXT MORNING, WHEN THE FARMER HURRIED TO HIS FIELD—
OH, GOD— NO! I AM RUINED!
AND I HAVE PROMISED A SHARE TO MY PARTNER!
THE GRIEF-STRICKEN FARMER RETURNED HOME AND TOOK TO HIS BED.
MASTER, JUST A MOUTHFUL OF FOOD...
NO— TAKE IT AWAY. I WILL NOT EAT.
JUST THEN, BUDDHA ARRIVED THERE.
O FARMER, I WISH TO SPEAK TO YOU.


THE FARMER SLOWLY ROSE AND CAME TO SIT BY BUDDHA.
TELL ME WHY YOU GRIEVE, O FARMER.
LAST NIGHT'S STORM DESTROYED MY CROP...
...AND I CANNOT KEEP MY WORD TO YOU.
YOU WOULD NOT GRIEVE THUS, IF YOU KNEW WHAT YOUR SORROW SPRINGS FROM. IT IS FROM ATTACHMENT, O FARMER.
ATTACHMENT TO YOUR CROPS, TO YOUR WORD, AND TO ME! FROM ATTACHMENT SPRINGS SORROW, FROM ATTACHMENT SPRINGS FEAR.
HE WHO IS FREE FROM ATTACHMENT IS FREE OF THE BURDEN OF BOTH SORROW AND FEAR.
I HAVE UNDERSTOOD, O VENERABLE ONE.


THE GOLDEN MAIDEN
IN THE TOWN OF SRAVASTI LIVED YOUNG KUMARA. HE WAS THE SON OF RICH PARENTS AND HE HAD COME OF AGE.
SON, YOU ARE OLD ENOUGH TO BE MARRIED. WE SHALL CHOOSE A GOOD, BEAUTIFUL GIRL FOR YOU AND...
FATHER, I DON'T WANT TO GET MARRIED.
BUT THE OLD COUPLE DID NOT GIVE UP. EVERY ONCE IN A WAY, THEY PUT THE QUESTION TO HIM AGAIN. AT LAST...
THEY WILL NOT TAKE 'NO' FOR AN ANSWER.
THE ONLY WAY OUT IS TO AGREE BUT MAKE SURE THAT THEY WON'T FIND THE GIRL FOR ME.
THE YOUNG MAN GOT SKILLED ARTISANS TO CARVE A GOLDEN IMAGE OF MATCHLESS BEAUTY. THEN—
MOTHER! FATHER! I WILL MARRY BUT...
...ONLY ONE SUCH AS THIS!



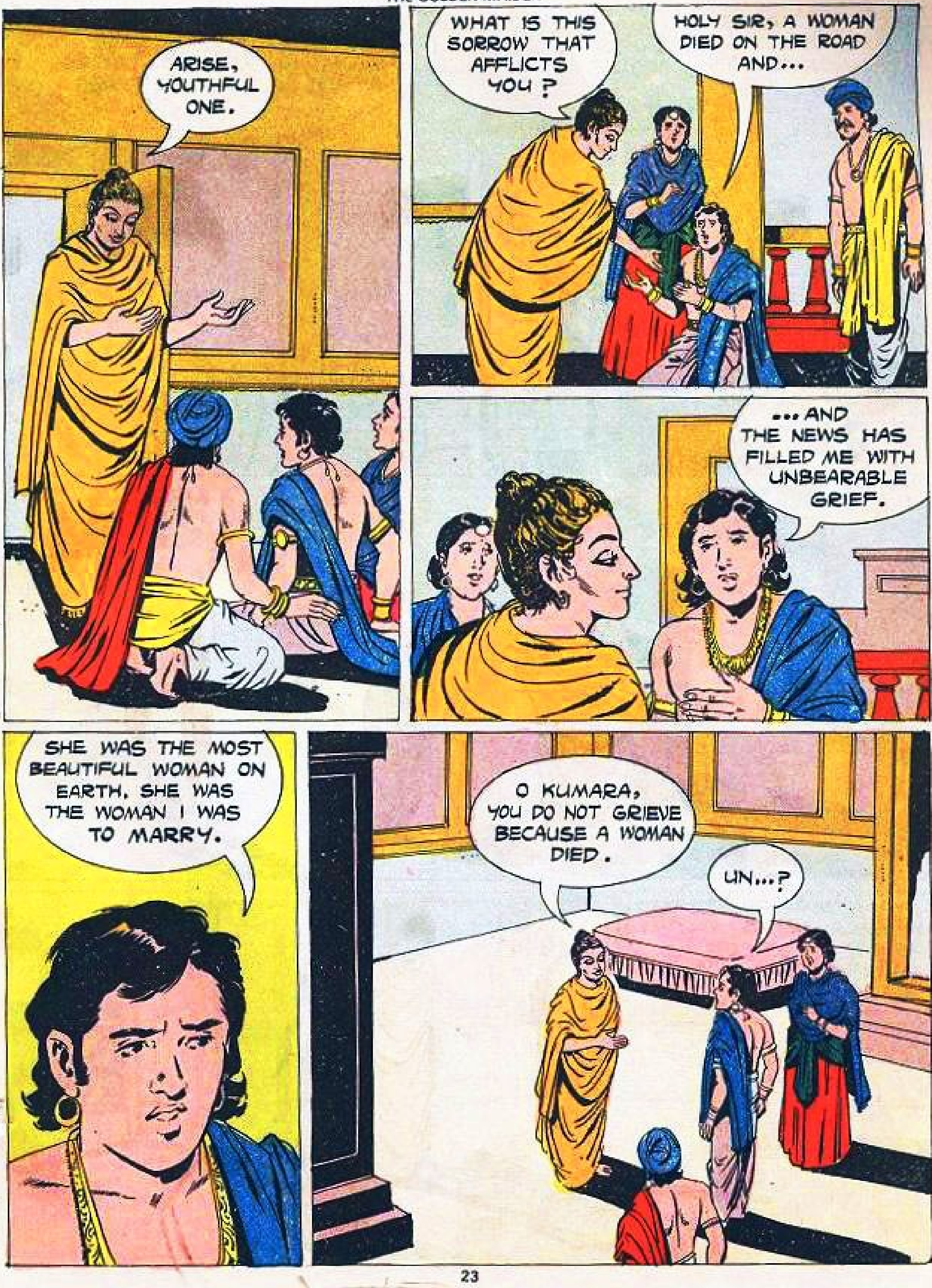
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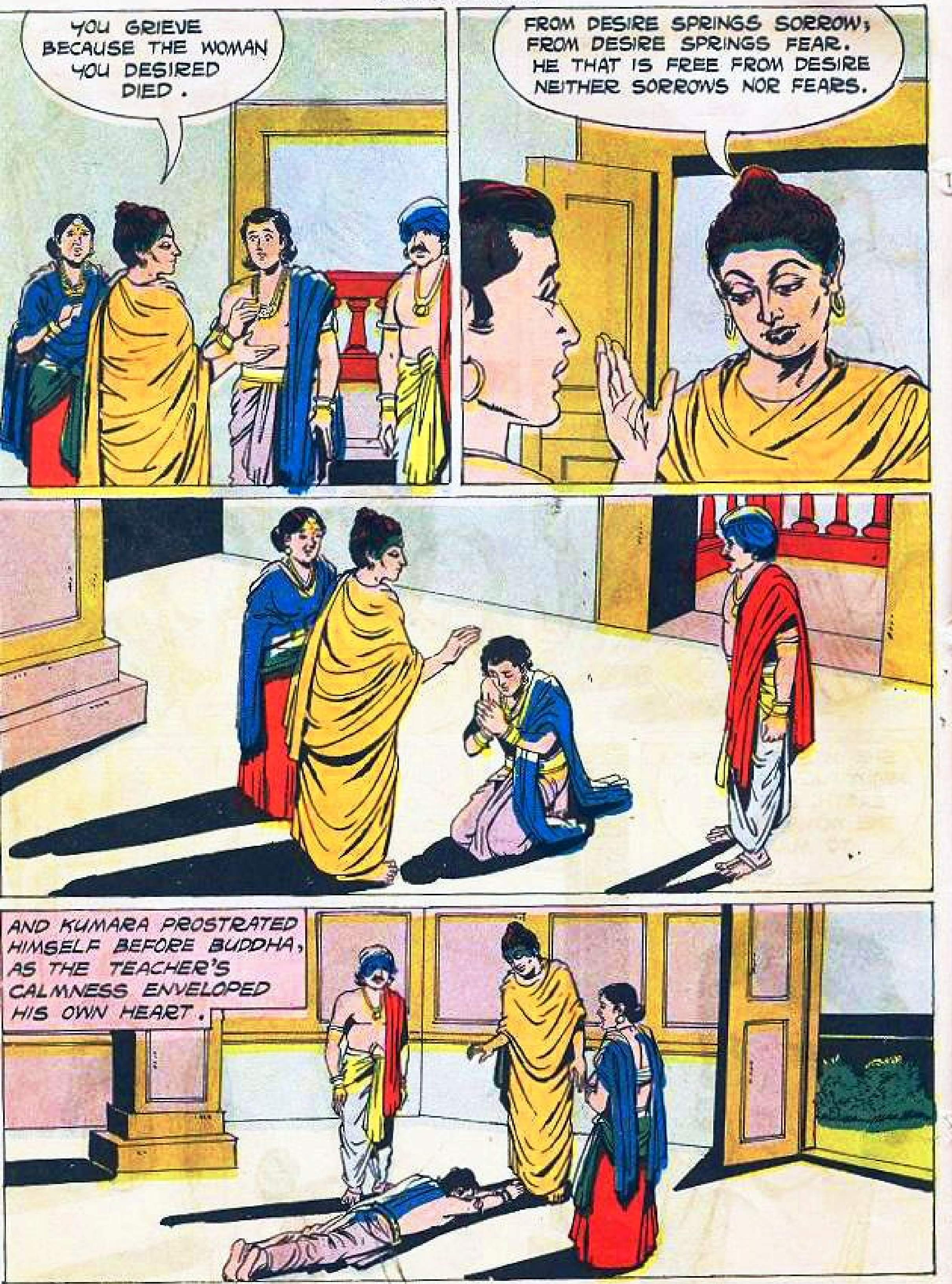

KUMARA RECEIVED THE NEWS WITH MIXED FEELINGS.
WHEN I GOT THE STATUE MADE, I NEVER IMAGINED THAT SUCH A GIRL COULD BE FOUND.
BUT NOW THAT SHE IS FOUND, I CAN HARDLY WAIT TO SEE HER!
THEY SAY THAT COMPARED WITH THE IMAGE...
...SHE IS FAR, FAR LOVELIER! I CANNOT EVEN IMAGINE THE EXTENT OF HER BEAUTY!
HE IMPATIENTLY AWAITED THE ARRIVAL OF THE GIRL.
IS THAT HER CARRIAGE?


NO! IT IS NOT. OH, HOW SLOWLY THE HOURS CRAWL BY!
EACH PASSING DAY, THOUGHTS OF HER KEPT HIM COMPANY.
OH!
IT IS NIGHT ALREADY, THE TENTH NIGHT SINCE SHE SET OUT. WHERE IS SHE?
FATHER, MOTHER — SHE IS STILL NOT COME. WHAT COULD DELAY HER SO?


SHE... SHE MUST BE ON HER WAY, SON!
MOTHER, ARE YOU HIDING SOMETHING FROM ME? IS SOMETHING WRONG?
NOT AT ALL, SON.
HAVE THEY REFUSED THE PROPOSAL?
NO, MY SON.
THEN WHY HASN'T SHE COME YET? WHY? WHY?
WE MUST NOT KEEP IT FROM HIM ANY LONGER.
YES. HE WILL HAVE TO BE TOLD.
SON...
YES?


SHE WILL NEVER COME.
BUT... WHY...?
SHE IS DEAD, SON.
DEAD?
ON HER WAY HERE, SHE FELL ILL AND DIED.
JUST THEN, THERE ON THE DOORSTEP, STOOD BUDDHA.


ARISE, YOUTHFUL ONE.
WHAT IS THIS SORROW THAT AFFLICTS YOU ?
HOLY SIR, A WOMAN DIED ON THE ROAD AND...
...AND THE NEWS HAS FILLED ME WITH UNBEARABLE GRIEF.
SHE WAS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN ON EARTH. SHE WAS THE WOMAN I WAS TO MARRY.
O KUMARA, YOU DO NOT GRIEVE BECAUSE A WOMAN DIED.
UN...?


YOU GRIEVE BECAUSE THE WOMAN YOU DESIRED DIED.
FROM DESIRE SPRINGS SORROW; FROM DESIRE SPRINGS FEAR. HE THAT IS FREE FROM DESIRE NEITHER SORROWS NOR FEARS.
AND KUMARA PROSTRATED HIMSELF BEFORE BUDDHA, AS THE TEACHER'S CALMNESS ENVELOPED HIS OWN HEART.

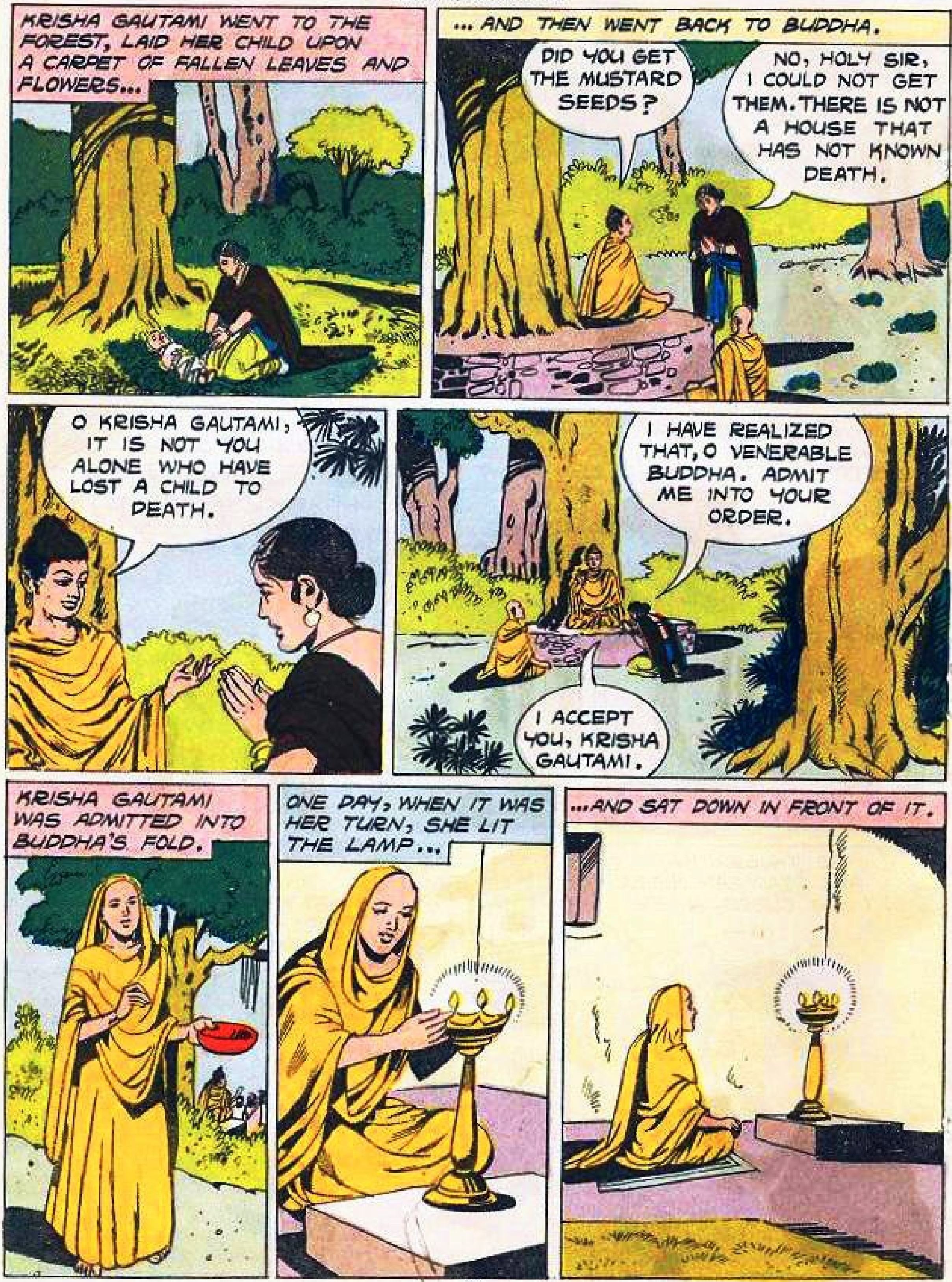

BUDDHA AND KRISHA GAUTAMI
HE HAS NOT WOKEN UP FOR HOURS. HE MUST BE VERY ILL INDEED.
ONCE, IN THE TOWN OF SRAVASTI, A WOMAN WAS SITTING BY HER CHILD'S BED.
HOW IS THE CHILD, GAUTAMI?
THE MAN WAS KRISHA GAUTAMI'S HUSBAND AND THE FATHER OF THE CHILD.
OH, GOD! NO! HE IS DEAD.

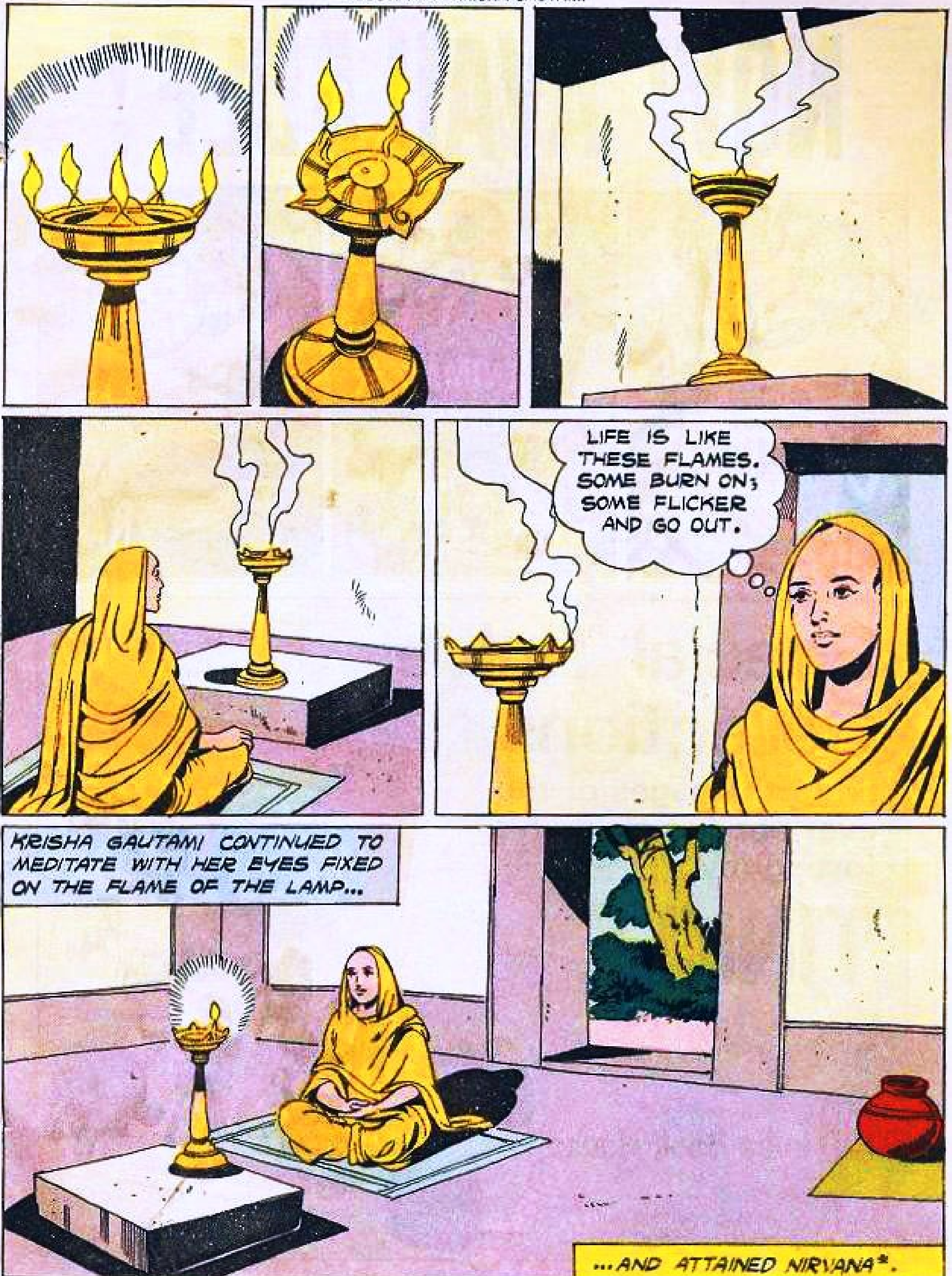

GO, SON, MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO CREMATE THE BODY.
CREMATE THE BODY? BURN MY SON? NO!
GAUTAMI, HE'S DEAD.
THEN I WILL FIND A REMEDY FOR DEATH.
GAUTAMI! WAIT! COME BACK! DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? HE'S DEAD.


POOR WOMAN! SHE HAS PROBABLY NOT SEEN A DEAD PERSON BEFORE. I MUST HELP HER.
KIND SIR, DO YOU KNOW OF ANY REMEDY FOR MY SON?
I'M AFRAID, I DON'T. BUT...
...BUT BUDDHA CAN HELP YOU. GO TO HIM.
FULL OF HOPE, KRISHA GAUTAMI AT ONCE WENT TO THE SACRED GROVE OF BUDDHA.
MY NAME IS KRISHA GAUTAMI, VENERABLE ONE. I WAS TOLD THAT YOU COULD CURE MY SON. SO I HAVE COME TO YOU.


BUDDHA LOOKED AT THE CHILD AND SMILED.
THEN —
GO, FETCH ME A FEW MUSTARD SEEDS FROM A HOUSE THAT HAS NEVER KNOWN DEATH.
KRISHA GAUTAMI SET OUT ON HER QUEST.
TAK
TAK
YES, WHAT IS IT ?
MOTHER, CAN YOU GIVE ME A FEW MUSTARD SEEDS?
THE WOMAN WENT IN AND BROUGHT THE SEEDS.
HERE YOU ARE.
THANK YOU, MOTHER.
I TRUST THIS HOUSE HAS NEVER KNOWN DEATH.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, GOOD WOMAN ?


WE THAT ARE LIVING ARE FEW, COMPARED WITH THOSE THAT HAVE DIED HERE.
THEN PLEASE TAKE BACK THESE MUSTARD SEEDS, FOR I HAVE NO USE FOR THEM.
KRISHA GAUTAMI WENT ON HER QUEST FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE, BUT EVERYWHERE IT WAS THE SAME. EVERY HOUSE HAD KNOWN DEATH AND EVERY DEAD BODY HAD BEEN BURNT TO ASHES.
...I LOST MY DAUGHTER...
...MY BROTHER DIED LAST YEAR...
THEY HAVE TAKEN MY OLD FATHER TO THE CREMATION GROUND TO BE BURNT...
SO THOSE THAT ARE DEAD CAN NEVER BE CURED, AFTER ALL.
AH, WHAT A VAIN SEARCH WAS MINE!


KRISHA GAUTAMI WENT TO THE FOREST, LAID HER CHILD UPON A CARPET OF FALLEN LEAVES AND FLOWERS...
... AND THEN WENT BACK TO BUDDHA.
DID YOU GET THE MUSTARD SEEDS?
NO, HOLY SIR, I COULD NOT GET THEM. THERE IS NOT A HOUSE THAT HAS NOT KNOWN DEATH.
O KRISHA GAUTAMI, IT IS NOT YOU ALONE WHO HAVE LOST A CHILD TO DEATH.
I HAVE REALIZED THAT, O VENERABLE BUDDHA. ADMIT ME INTO YOUR ORDER.
I ACCEPT YOU, KRISHA GAUTAMI.
KRISHA GAUTAMI WAS ADMITTED INTO BUDDHA'S FOLD.
ONE DAY, WHEN IT WAS HER TURN, SHE LIT THE LAMP...
...AND SAT DOWN IN FRONT OF IT.



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